

March 20, 2025

OPEN LETTER TO CHANCELLOR JULIO FRENK FROM THE UCLA TASK FORCE ON ANTI-PALESTINIAN, ANTI-MUSLIM AND ANTI-ARAB RACISM

Dear Chancellor Julio Frenk

On March 10, you announced an [initiative](#) to combat antisemitism and declared that UCLA will implement the recommendations of the Task Force to Combat Antisemitism and Anti-Israel Bias, chaired by Professor Stuart Gabriel. These recommendations include “improving the complaint system, assuring enforcement of current and new laws and policies, and cooperating with stakeholders.” The UCLA Task Force on Anti-Palestinian, Anti-Muslim and Anti-Arab Racism, was created at the same time as the Task Force to Combat Antisemitism and Anti-Israel Bias. Both Task Forces were presumably assigned equal value as advisors to the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost in a moment of unprecedented historical crisis in the university. Indeed, EVCP Darnell Hunt consulted with us numerous times over the past year and a half, without which the incidents of racism and terrible harm to many students and faculty would not have been brought to light. We submitted [three reports](#) documenting the racism, discrimination and violence directed at Palestinians, Muslims, Arabs and anyone, including Jews, who express opposition to the war in Gaza and who support the human rights and dignity of the Palestinian people.

In your refusal to engage these reports, and in your endorsement of one task force and not the other, you have demonstrated racial and religious animus and discrimination towards Palestinians, Muslims and Arabs, and towards the Task Force itself. Your action dismisses our labor and ignores the violence and discrimination we have documented.

We write to remind you that the Task Force on Anti-Palestinian, Anti-Muslim and Anti-Arab Racism has produced no less than three substantive reports documenting discrimination against Palestinians, Muslims and Arabs and those in solidarity with them. The first report, submitted on May 13, 2024, documents the attacks on the Palestine Solidarity Encampment by outside groups and by police; the second report submitted on June 28, 2024, details the subsequent militarization of the campus and the aggressive policing and legal actions taken towards our students. We concluded that the militarization of our campus, the persistent attacks on students, faculty, and staff for supporting ceasefire, divestment and disclosure, the punitive measures deployed by the administration toward anyone even mildly critical of Israeli policies, have made UCLA less safe than ever for Palestinian, Arab, Muslim students and faculty, and for those in solidarity with Palestinians. We have amply demonstrated a systemic discrimination against these groups.

Our third report, submitted January 31, 2025, documents the significant curtailment of academic freedom and the repression of speech at the David Geffen School of Medicine (DGSOM). We have documented repeated violations of codes of conduct and California law and shown that faculty and students have repeatedly brought these violations to the attention of UCLA administration to little avail.

With respect to academic freedom, we note that not only is Palestine by and large (with notable pockets of marginalized exceptions) not taught at UCLA, but, as the third report shows, on far too many occasions when Palestine *is* taught, that teaching has been disrupted and penalized. When individual instructors take on the question of Palestine at UCLA, they do so at

their own risk in terms of facing harassment, intimidation and attempts at censorship, on all of which the administration remains silent and inactive. We note, furthermore, that whereas our campus offers plenty of space and facilities and resources for the free discussion of Zionism and Israel—in the Center for Jewish Studies, the Center for Israel Studies and the campus adjacent Hillel—there is no space for Palestine studies at UCLA. There is no safe space to talk about Palestine on our campus.

This discriminatory situation is worsening. As we brought to your attention, for example, there is an alarming escalation of doxxing of racialized medical students and residents at DGSOM and we are deeply concerned about the considerable harm they, and anyone in support of Palestinian human rights, are suffering both in their professional and personal lives. Finally, you have had our recommendations for some time now- recommendations that call on you to drop all charges against our students and to stop penalizing the advocacy of Palestinian human rights and speech on Palestine in general. We have specifically asked that UCLA take measures to hold accountable students, faculty and staff whose anti-Palestinian actions contravene the applicable codes of conduct at UCLA, mandated by the University of California, and the law.

The Task Force on Anti-Palestinian, Anti-Muslim and Anti-Arab Racism includes internationally recognized experts on racism and colonialism whose books are highly acclaimed. Our reports are based on our scholarly expertise and offer a detailed qualitative account of how students, staff and faculty are penalized for their support of Palestinian rights and for their efforts to stop a genocide. As has been [pointed out](#) about task force reports on antisemitism, such reports can contain serious methodological flaws when they are not prepared by experts in the field. It is concerning that not one of UCLA's well-known experts on antisemitism sit on the Task Force on Antisemitism and Anti-Israel bias.

The asymmetry of your response to the two task forces is glaring. It is highly consequential. At a time when the national climate is one of intensified persecution of supporters of Palestinian human rights, justified on the grounds that universities are hotbeds of antisemitism – a charge that always conflates antisemitism with criticism of Israel--, we find the denial of Anti-Palestinian, Anti-Muslim and Anti-Arab Racism at UCLA to be complicitous with the agenda to destroy universities altogether.

Discrimination and the assault on rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly are increasingly authorized by higher authorities with the intent of transforming the university into a zone where the free and open exchange of ideas is prohibited, and the university becomes a place of intense surveillance and fear. Universities that heed the call of the Federal Department of Justice to repress speech and protest and to violate the constitutional rights of its students and faculty only hasten their own demise.

We urge you once again to preserve UCLA as a space where the rights of all students and faculty are respected and protected. We strongly recommend the affirmative and active protection of the right of students and faculty at UCLA to work on Palestine and speak freely on Palestinian rights without fear of repression or punishment.

UCLA Task Force on Anti-Palestinian, Anti-Muslim and Anti-Arab Racism

Signed: Gaye Theresa Johnson, co-chair; Sherene H. Razack, co-chair.